



## ALBANIANS FOR CHRIST

*We would like you to meet a few of our special friends. With all the bad press the Albanians have been getting lately, we would like to remind you that there are some wonderful, God-fearing, Jesus-loving, people-serving, Christian Brothers and sisters who are living for the Lord and helping advance His kingdom here and abroad...*

**Dity** Hello! My name is Dity and I have lived here for 5 years. I want to tell you that my life in Albania where I was born was not so special. As everyone else in that country, I had the same economical difficulties, and the same thirst for freedom. Our country was closed for 50 years under the communist dictatorship.

In that time all religion was illegal so I didn't know much about God. I tried to make my life interesting by reading foreign books (which were very rare), going to school, or going out, etc. In a few words, I didn't have much hope or purpose in life. My spirit was empty (even though I didn't know I had one). But sorrow and pain reached a peak at age 11 when I had to face my parents' divorce. It hurt me so much that I couldn't bear it anymore, so I decided to kill myself. I tried lots of ways but it wasn't easy. So one day I came up with a terrible idea. I stood on the side of a bridge, planning to step in front of a speeding truck. When I saw a big truck come, I closed my eyes and stepped into the road when it was only about 2 meters away. I waited for it to hit me, but nothing happened. I opened my eyes and found myself standing in the middle of the tire tracks, watching the truck continue to go on. There was no natural explanation for it. I should have been killed. At that time I didn't understand why I lived, but later I came to understand that God had a plan for my life.

Soon after that I was able to get a Bible (even though it was illegal to have a Bible) and I read it very much and had many questions. The people I asked these questions to laughed at me and did not answer me. About 8 years later, after the collapse of the communist government, God brought some Christians into Albania who helped me to understand the answers to my questions about the Bible. Questions like, Who is Jesus? What is eternal life? How can I have eternal life? I was like a spiritual desert and their answers were like rain on my soul. In only a couple of months I came to understand that Jesus came to this earth from heaven to suffer the punishment for my sins. I understood that He didn't stay dead but He rose from the grave with power over death, and that He was offering me the gift of eternal life. I received that gift of eternal life and it has made such a difference in my life.

Although I had many problems in my life (and still do), I can say that the quality of my life, both inside and out, has improved very much. God has helped me to understand that living in His way will help me to know Him better, to experience life as He created me to experience it, and to build relationships with others who know Him. This has helped me to have a very real and strong hope (when before I had so little hope) and to begin to understand God's purpose for my life. I have experienced His healing in times of sickness, His provision in times of need, His comfort in times of pain, and His loving presence at all times. Although I still have many problems, He is with me in the middle of them and He has given me the peaceful assurance that He has a place prepared for me in heaven, not because I am good, but because He is good and loving and forgiving.

**Alma** The following poem was written before the new life I discovered. I share it with you as an example of how I was thinking and living in those days...

Who were you, that made me feel alive in my mother's baby room?  
 Who were you, that on the third day designed for me that sort of luck?  
 Who were you, that my childhood dream destroyed?  
 Who are you, that doesn't let me laugh?  
 Who are you, that makes me cry?  
 D--- you more than me!  
 D--- you!  
 Damnation. To whom? To the evolution or to the creator which is unknown to me?

To destiny or to the sin? To the place where I was born, to the system, or to my parents that I loved so much? I d--- the darkness without knowing to whom, and I was singing to the death, Me, the deceased, for thirty years. There were days when I was dreaming for that--that we could know Truth, Light, and Love without condition or limit, but it was not for me. I was destined for trauma and pain. I was born into an inhuman system and the daughter of a political prisoner. A life of persecution, gray, without color left me with no meaning and no power for living life.

But then something happened to prevent further failed plans for suicide. Suddenly, a friend came to stay with me on her way back from Israel. After discussing many things, she asked me a difficult question. What is your relationship with God like? Which God? I replied. The God who hears and doesn't hear? The God who gives and doesn't give? The God who exists and doesn't exist? What do we have to do with each other?

My friend told me what God the Father and His Son the Lord Jesus did for me in dying on the cross and rising from the dead to pay for my sins against Him. She told me about Him whose name I did not know and about Him who had saved her from physical and spiritual death. I will pray for you, she said. I asked her to do it because I wanted to see her if it would work.

It sounded strange, funny, and interesting to hear her say the words, I will pray for you but deep down in my heart I wished to know more about this God of whom she spoke. She left me with a Bible and with an exciting feeling about knowing God the Father.

I began to read this book to gain greater understanding. I started to meet Christian people and understand how much God has done for me and how special each one of us is to Him. I learned about the value of life and how death was only the beginning of a better life with Him. The Truth unfolded Light in my eyes and in my soul. The Unconditional Love was so close to me. I not only did not want to kill myself anymore, but now I had a reason and purpose for living. I wanted to share this good news with others.

The deeper I know my God, the better I understand His eyes and heart with which He sees the world, and I pray to see and feel the same. So the prayer which in the beginning seemed so strange and funny began to be a part of my everyday life, giving me power and joy. His love gave me form and dimension. Although the circumstances in which I met my Lord were very dark and lonely--far from my fatherland and family--I was happy in God because through Jesus I found a new family of people who truly love me and care about me. My heart, which had been broken into pieces and left me in such pain that I had no love left within me, was re-created in a new and sensitive way, like never before. I turned from my sins and was made new.

I close my story with these verses from Romans 14:7-8. Yes, we all live for the Lord. We don't live and die for ourselves. If we live, we are living for the Lord. And if we die, we are dying for the Lord. So living or dying, we belong to the Lord.

**Ilir** In Albania, nobody heard about God or about Jesus. But my mother told me some things about God. Every December 25th, they had a special day but would never explain the details about that day's celebration for fear of the government.

In 1991 left Albania and moved to Greece. In 1993 I met a Greek man named Anastasios who helped me with many things and also told me about Jesus. But I didn't believe him.

In December of 1993 I returned to Albania. I started reading a Bible and I had many questions about the things that I read. I began talking with a priest in my city who explained many things to me. In May of 1995 I wanted to return to Athens and I prayed that God would show me His power by helping me get there.

Neither time nor space will allow me to share the many ways God answered that prayer, but when I made it to Athens, I knew that God was real. In July 1995, I met a Christian Albanian named Paulin who took me to the International Believers Fellowship. I began to really understand for the first time who God is and what He has done for us. I also understood who Jesus was and what He had done for me, and I believed. I was later baptized in a Greek church.

As I attended the International Believers Fellowship, my church, and the ministry opportunities of HELPING HANDS I began to grow spiritually. I learned many things about what it means to be a Christian and I am continuing to learn many things that are helping me experience more and more of God's active presence in my life.



## SUMMER PROGRAM CHANGE

**SOUP KITCHEN**  
 WILL NOW BE ON MONDAYS AT 12:00 NOON

**REFRESHMENT BAR**  
 WILL BE ON WEDNESDAY & FRIDAY EVENINGS 6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.

HELPING HANDS • 47 Merandrou, 5th floor, 10437 Athens  
 e-mail: 113163.341@compuserve.com